

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2455

INFO USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 22150

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: DGS

TAGS: TECH

SUBJECT: FRENCH AND NON-PROLIFERATION

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D) PARIS 16990

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH HAVE NOT SHOWN SIGNS OF FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGING THEIR POSITION OF INDEPENDENTLY DETERMINING THE APPLICATION OF SAFEGUARDS TO EXPORTS OF NUCLEAR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS TO NON-NUCLEAR COUNTRIES. PLEDGED TO ACT AS IF THEY WERE NPT SIGNATORIES, THEY SUPPORT THE OBJECTIVE OF LIMITING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, BUT REFUSE TO ADHERE TO INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS TO SAFEGUARD EXPORTS. IN PRACTICE, THE FRENCH DETERMINE SAFEGUARDS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, THUS PRESERVING MAXIMUM FREEDOM OF FUTURE ACTION. EAGER TO INCREASE THEIR NUCLEAR EXPORTS AND INFLUENCE AMONG THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, THE FRENCH ARE NOT LIKELY TO SACRIFICE THIS FLEXIBILITY UNLESS THEY ARE ASSURED OF THE EFFICACY OF THE FUTURE SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM AND CAN SEE THAT IT WILL NOT IN ANY WAY HURT THEM.

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THEY MAY ALSO SEEK GREATER OPPORTUNITIES TO MARKET FREN-

CH NUCLEAR PRODUCTS IN THE U.S. EMBASSY WOULD FAVOR LOW-KEY BUT HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH TO FRENCH, POSSIBLY DURING SAUVAGNARGUES VISIT, URGING FRENCH TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION ON SAFEGUARDS. IN FOLLOW UP, WE SUGGEST BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS AND USE OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONS, LIKE THE IAEA. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS REPORT ASSESSES THE FRENCH POSITION ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND ON SAFEGUARDING EXPORTS OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT. IN THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS 4 QUESTIONS ARE ADDRESSED: WHAT CAN THE FRENCH DO? WHAT ARE THEY DOING? IS A CHANGE IN POLICY LIKELY? WHAT SHOULD THE U.S. DO?

2. NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES

SINCE WORLD WAR II, THE FRENCH HAVE STRIVEN TO DEVELOP A MAJOR INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR CAPABILITY. THEY HAVE PROGRESSED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY CAN TODAY PROVIDE ALL THE NUCLEAR ASSISTANCE REQUIRED BY NON-NUCLEAR POWERS, TO DEVELOP BOTH CIVIL AND MILITARY CAPABILITIES. THE FRENCH MILITARY PROGRAM HAS DEVELOPED A DIVERSIFIED FAMILY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS WELL AS FACILITIES FOR MAKING WEAPONS GRADE HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM. ON NON-MILITARY SIDE, THE FRENCH CAN EXPORT NUCLEAR REACTORS, FUEL FABRICATION PLANTS, REPROCESSING PLANTS (WHICH REMOVE PLUTONIUM FROM SPENT FUEL) AND PROBABLY ENRICHMENT FACILITIES. THEY ALSO HAVE AMPLE RESERVES OF NATURAL URANIUM. THE ONE MISSING LINK IS THE LACK OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL ENRICHMENT FACILITIES. IN THE 1980'S, WITH THE PLANNED COMPLETION OF THE EURODIF ENRICHMENT PLANT IN FRANCE, (POSSIBLY ANOTHER IN QUEBEC), THE FRENCH NUCLEAR INDUSTRY WILL BECOME RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT.

3. THE FRENCH ARE TRYING TO SELL THREE TYPES OF NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS INTERNATIONALLY: 1) THE LIGHT WATER REACTOR (WESTINGHOUSE, OR GE LICENSES), 2) THE HIGH TEMPERATURE GAS REACTOR (GULF ATOMIC LICENSE), AND 3) THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR (FRENCH DESIGN). IN ADDITION, THE FRENCH HAVE BUILT SEVERAL COMMERCIAL SIZE GAS GRAPHITE REACTORS AND AN EXPERIMENTAL HEAVY WATER MODULATED REACTOR. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THESE TWO NATURAL URAN-
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IUM FUELED REACTORS HAS BEEN HALTED.

4. FRENCH POSITION

ALTHOUGH NOT HAVING SIGNED THE NPT, FRANCE HAS PLEDGED TO CONDUCT ITSELF AS IF IT HAD. ITS OFFICIALS STATE THAT FRENCH SHARE THE OBJECTIVES OF STEMMING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, BUT USE DIFFERENT MEANS (REF D). IN PRACTICE, SAFEGUARDS ON NUCLEAR EXPORTS ARE DECIDED ON A

CASE-BY-CASE BASIS WITH NO KNOWN OBLIGATION TO PUBLICLY DISCLOSE THEIR NATURE. THUS THE FRENCH MAINTAIN MAXIMUM FREEDOM OF FUTURE ACTION. THEY CLAIM THAT THEIR FLEXIBLE APPROACH IS MORE REALISTIC THAN THE IAEA'S AND THAT THEIR SAFEGUARDS RECORD IS CLEAN EXCEPT FOR THE

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DIMONA REACTOR BUILT IN ISRAEL BEFORE THE PRESENT SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM TOOK SHAPE, A STEP THEY PROFOUNDLY REGRET TODAY. THE FRENCH FEEL THAT THE PRESENCE OF FRENCH TECHNICIANS AT THE FRENCH-BUILT NUCLEAR POWER STATION IN SPAIN ENSURES THAT NO PLUTONIUM WILL BE DIVERTED TO THE SPANISH MILITARY PROGRAM. THEY HAVE TOLD US THAT THE FRENCH FAST BREEDER IN INDIA WILL BE ADEQUATELY SAFEGUARDED. THEY HAVE SIGNED A TRILATERAL IAEA SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT WITH JAPAN AND PROBABLY WILL SIGN ANOTHER WITH IRAN.

5. DESPITE FRENCH ASSURANCES, THE FRENCH FOREIGN OFFICE HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO DISCLOSE THE DETAILS OF ITS POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING FUTURE EXPORT, IF INDEED A WORKED OUT

POLICY EXISTS. IN ADDITION, THE FRENCH DO NOT ALLOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR NONPROLIFERATION TO OVERSHADOW THEIR TRADITIONAL RESPECT FOR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. WHILE PLEDGED NOT TO GIVE WEAPONS ASSISTANCE, THEY RESPECT THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO CHOOSE TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY AND WILL TAKE NO SANCTIONS AGAINST THEM (REF C). INDEED THE MEMORY OF U.S. OPPOSITION TO THE
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FRENCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT IS STILL ALIVE AND NO DOUBT AN INFLUENCE ON FRENCH ATTITUDES. IN ADDITION, THE FRENCH SEEM TO BE GENUINELY SKEPTICAL THAT THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM WILL ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE OF STOPPING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION.

6. LIKELIHOOD OF CHANGE

CONTRARY TO THE DEPARTMENT'S OPTIMISM (REF A), WE HAVE SEEN NO PERSUASIVE SIGNS THAT THE FRENCH ARE CONSIDERING CHANGING THEIR POSITION ON SAFEGUARDING NUCLEAR EXPORTS. EVEN THE INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION HAS HAD LITTLE EFFECT HERE, EXCEPT TO CONFIRM FRENCH SKEPTICISM ON NON-PROLIFERATION.

TRUE, THE FRENCH HAVE DECLARED THEIR INTENTION "NORMALLY" TO HOLD FUTURE NUCLEAR TESTS UNDERGROUND, HOWEVER, THE UNDERGROUND FACILITIES HAVE BEEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION FOR SOME TIME AND WILL BE READY ONLY NEXT YEAR. MOREOVER, WE DO NOT KNOW (AND THE FRENCH MAY NOT KNOW, EITHER,) IF THEIR UNDERGROUND FACILITIES WILL MEET ALL THEIR FUTURE NUCLEAR TESTING REQUIREMENTS. IN ANY EVENT, WE SUSPECT THAT THE GOF IS PREPARED TO CARRY OUT ADDITIONAL ATMOSPHERIC TESTS IF THIS SEEMS NECESSARY.

7. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT A CHANGE IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME. THE NEW AND SO FAR UNKNOWN FACTOR IS OF COURSE PRESIDENT GISCARD. HOWEVER, BEFORE ANY CHANGE IS MADE, THE FRENCH WILL HAVE TO BE ASSURED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM WILL ACTUALLY WORK AND THAT THE U.S. IS FULLY COMMITTED TO ENFORCING THIS SYSTEM. THEY MAY ALSO SEEK A QUID PRO QUO FOR GIVING UP THEIR PRESENT FREEDOM OF ACTION SUCH AS ASSURANCE OF EQUAL TREATMENT IN THE U.S. MARKET FOR FRENCH NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES LIKE VITRIFICATION OF WASTES AND THE FRENCH FAST BREEDER REACTOR.

8. IF THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO APPROACH THE FRENCH TO REOPEN THE SAFEGUARDS ISSUE, A STEP WHICH WE WOULD FAVOR, WE SUGGEST IT BE DONE QUIETLY AT A HIGH LEVEL, PERHAPS DURING SAUVAGNARGUES' VISIT TO WASHINGTON. THE AMBASSADOR HAS ALERTED HIM OF OUR INT-

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EREST(REF B) AND SUGGESTED BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, DUR-

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ING WHICH THE FRENCH POSITION COULD BE CLARIFIED. IN DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE MULTILATERALLY, THE FRENCH WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO USE EXISTING INSTITUTIONS, NAMELY THE IAEA. THE FRENCH MIGHT BE APPROACHED WITH FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS:

- 1) IN COMING YEARS, THE PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY WILL BECOME COMMONPLACE IN MANY NON-NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES, THUS INCREASING THE POSSIBILITY THAT IMPORTED NUCLEAR MATERIAL OR EQUIPMENT WILL BE DIVERTED TO MILITARY ENDS.
- 2) THE INDIAN EXPLOSION HAS BROKEN THE ICE FOR THE THIRD WORLD. OTHER NATIONS MAY WANT TO FOLLOW.

3) FRANCE'S INDEPENDENCE OF EXISTING INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS ARRANGEMENTS HAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT BOTH ON NUCLEAR EXPORTING COUNTRIES, WHO ARE FEARFUL OF LOSING EXPORTS TO RIVALS WITH LESS STRICT SAFEGUARDS, AND ON IMPORTING COUNTRIES, WHOSE NUCLEAR AMBITIONS ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE LACK OF A UNITY AMONG NUCLEAR EXPORTERS.

4) WITH THE ADHERENCE OF THE FRENCH, THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM HAS A REAL CHANCE OF LIMITING OR SLOWING
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PROLIFERATION. WITHOUT IT, THEIR SKEPTICISM MAY BECOME SELF-FULFILLING.

5) THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO HOLD BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOF ON POSSIBLE QUID PRO QUO'S THAT MIGHT MAKE FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF SAFEGUARD OBLIGATIONS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO FRANCE.

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